

Dear Representative Luxenberg, Senator Moore, and members of the Housing Committee:

My name is Chelsea Connery, I am a resident of New Haven, CT. I signed up to testify for SB 4 which, at the time of original notice included a provision for a rent cap. Thus, today I am testifying in support of SB 4, with amendments adding a cap on rents and an end to no cause evictions.

Rent has skyrocketed across CT, increasing an average of 20% over the last two years, (and even higher in some communities) largely because corporate landlords have increased rental prices by such a large margin that many families struggle to pay rent each month. Indeed, approximately 52% of CT renters are already cost-burdened, meaning we spend more than 30% of our gross monthly income on rent. Meanwhile, wages haven't kept up — over the last two decades through the period of 2017-2021, median rents increased in Connecticut nearly twice as much as the income of renters. Making matters worse, the number of “no fault” evictions has also increased, meaning tenants are pushed from their homes even when a landlord doesn't claim they did anything wrong. Indeed, I have personal experiences with these broader community issues.

This past summer, I was pushed out of the home I lived in for nearly 7 years when my small landlord sold the multi-family house in which I lived to a larger corporate landlord. I ended up leaving voluntarily after being told that even if I finished out my lease amidst the planned renovations, I would be prevented from renewing my lease and/or be priced out. The speculative increases mentioned in conversation were nearly double what I was currently paying. The whole situation and process was very painful and uniquely disempowering. That apartment was the first rental I had stayed in for more than a year or two; it felt like my home and all it took was a handful of people with capital believing they could make a better profit to uproot my life.

During the same period of time, I was a legal intern supporting on housing cases, specifically eviction defense. There were clear patterns in how and who was being evicted — it was primarily no-fault, lapse of time evictions of working-class folks of color by large, corporate landlords whose actions could solely be interpreted as motivated by an interest in exploiting the housing crisis for profit. Another pattern was tenants whose landlords were demanding large rent increases without conditions being adequate. In many cases, tenants who push too hard for improvements in conditions are also targets for no-fault lapse of time evictions. Again, landlords were seemingly pushing those tenants out only to make superficial adjustments to a property (coat of paint, etc.), and rent to someone else not privy to the underlying defects that will soon cause them trouble. While I got to experience the importance of the legal aid system in supporting people through these awful — and, frankly, dehumanizing — processes, it was also clear there was a need for front-end changes to ensure people never got to the point of needing legal aid in the first place.

The housing crisis we have found ourselves in requires a multiplicity of solutions that address short-term and long-term needs. Building more housing is only one part of the answer. A rent cap is only one part of that answer. However, I and over half of CT renters are cost-burdened *right now*. While we need to build more housing that is affordable, we know that can take years. Moreover, we need to ensure that housing remains affordable. A statewide rent cap provides *immediate* relief to renters and ensures that housing we build today *remains* affordable tomorrow. SB 4 has a number of excellent provisions (e.g., winter eviction moratorium and restrictions on application and late fees) but should also maintain its provision for a rent cap and add good cause eviction protection — a rent cap is one of those front-end solutions that would have helped me and many others in my community remain in our homes and would give us peace of mind that we will have stability where we are now.

Moreover, the most rigorous [studies](#) of modern [rent stabilization](#) show it [does not](#) negatively impact [new construction](#). And rent stabilization will not negatively affect [property maintenance](#), since the proposed

cap more than covers maintenance costs. Many other economic factors impact construction and renovations — interest rates, labor supply, materials supply chains. Rent caps are not one of those factors, they do not impact quantity or quality of housing.

To expand a bit on the topic of landlord costs, we have heard a lot of arguments from opponents surrounding inflation that are misguided. First, more than half of most landlords' costs, such as mortgages are fixed and thus do not rise with inflation. Annual inflation since 2000 has been [below 2.5%](#). In line with that, annual increases in median rent in Connecticut over the 2010s, including the years just prior to the pandemic [averaged 2.1%](#). Second, [rising rents actually drive inflation](#) more than they reflect it. [Housing is the largest cost in the Consumer Price Index](#) (CPI) inflation series, the official measure of inflation in the CPI is called “owners’ equivalent rent of residences” and “rent of primary residence” (often referred to as the [shelter index](#)) and it accounts for almost one third of median CPI. Thus, stable rents actually prevent some level of inflation. Third, while all of our residents are stressed by inflation costs, it is working-class [renters](#) that are bearing the [brunt](#) of such [costs](#).

It is also worth noting that the arguments made here are based not only in personal experience but are backed up by empirical research that is not funded by real estate lobbies — I have cited examples of such research below. The dramatic claims made by opposition are unnuanced arguments not borne out by well-conducted research. Its hard to feel like the opposition is engaging with this legislation in good faith, they make sweeping claims in support of the status quo because they benefit from keeping things the way they are. Both supporters and opposition have a financial stake in this policy — for the latter, it is unimpeded and exploitative profits; for the former, it is literally a roof over our heads, other basic needs, and stable, safe communities.

Supporters testifying today are from diverse backgrounds representing varied demographic and professional perspectives. This is perhaps unsurprising because recent [polling data](#) indicates 72% of CT voters support a 2.5% annual cap on rent increases.

When rents are [stable](#) and predictable, we're able to plan for our future. We can budget to make sure we're able to make the rent, while also being able to provide the daily needs for our families. Our kids can attend the same school. We can get to know our neighbors and be involved in our community. This type of stability and community and economic investment is what creates prosperity for CT.

Homeowners already have the stability of a steady mortgage payment and freedom from the fear of sudden displacement. Coupled with protections against evictions without good cause, rent stabilization allows us all to enjoy the security of a stable home, today and tomorrow. We *all* deserve the chance to put down roots in our communities.

I strongly support a rent cap, a winter eviction moratorium, and restrictions on application and late fees but SB 4 would be stronger with the following changes:

- **The cap should be lower—I suggest 2.5 or 3%.** This tracks pre-pandemic average rent increases and would be affordable and predictable to tenants.
- **It should cover apartments in between tenants** so landlords can't push out tenants to increase the rent.
- **It should expand good cause eviction protections** to cover all tenants so they have greater stability in their homes.

Sincerely,
Chelsea Connery
New Haven, CT

There is abundant research that demonstrates the effectiveness of modern rent stabilization policy in improving renter stability and can help Connecticut learn from previously enacted policies to make the best decisions on which policy provisions we adopt in our context. Here are a few sources:

Center for Urban and Regional Affairs at the University of Minnesota: ["Minneapolis Rent Stabilization Study"](#)

PolicyLink: ["Our Homes, Our Future: How Rent Control Can Build Stable, Healthy Communities"](#)

Haas Institute: ["Opening the Door for Rent Control"](#)

University of Southern California, Dornsife: ["Rent Matters: What are the Impacts of Rent Stabilization Measures?"](#)

Urban Habitat: ["Strengthening Communities Through Rent Control and Just-Cause Evictions"](#)

New York University Furman: ["Gentrification Response: A Survey of Strategies to Maintain Neighborhood Economic Diversity"](#)

Urban Displacement Project: ["Rent Control Policy Brief"](#)

Journal of the American Planning Association: ["Who Benefits from Rent Control?"](#) ([Full version here](#))

University of Winnipeg (2011): ["An Analysis of Manitoba's Rent Regulation Program and the Impact on the Rental Housing Market"](#)

Harvard Law Review (1988): ["Reassessing Rent Control: Its Economic Impact in a Gentrifying Housing Market"](#) ([Full version here](#))

University of Southern California, Price in Los Angeles Times (2018): ["No, rent control doesn't always reduce the supply of housing"](#)

Journal of Economic Perspectives (1995): ["Time for Revisionism on Rent Control?"](#)

American Economic Review (2019): ["The Effects of Rent Control on Tenants, Landlords, and Inequality: Evidence from San Francisco."](#)

Pew (2022): ["Investors Bought a Quarter of Homes Sold Last Year, Driving Up Rents."](#)

Urban Institute (2019): ["Will New Statewide Rent Control Laws Decrease Housing Supply?"](#)

Journal of Urban Affairs (2007): ["Thirty Years of Rent Control: A Survey of New Jersey Cities."](#)

Community Service Society (2019): ["Rent Regulation in NYC: How It Works, What Went Wrong, and How to Fix It."](#)